

2 No. 7

Witness -
Cholera -

Cholera Infantum.

Thos. J. Withing

(1868)

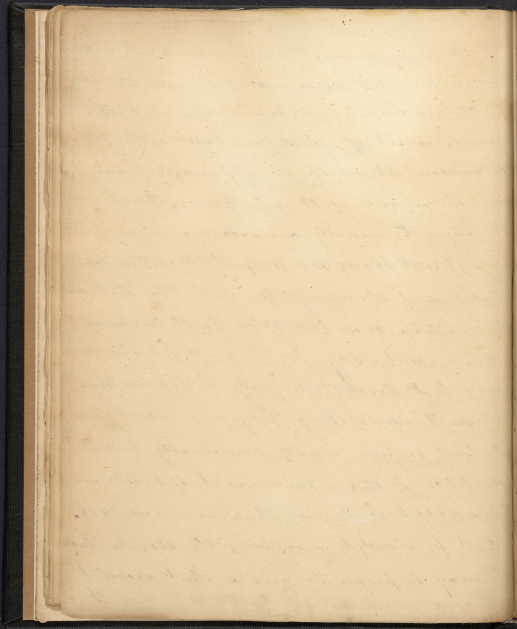
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Cholera Infantum
The Cholera
An Account of The Cholera
Infantum, as it appeared in
Fredericksburg Virginia. In
the Summer of 1818.

By Thomas T Withers
of Tauxier County
Virginia

Of the many diseases, to which infants are subject, there are few that deserve more of our attention than the Cholera Infantum; known by several other names, most of which are taken either from the season at which it appears, or from some one or more of the symptoms. The time at which it usually ~~prevails~~ occurs; differs in different places according to the situation & latitude of them; together with the state of the weather. As in Charleston South Carolina it appears about May. In Philadelphia, according to Dr Rush; from July to September. And in Fredericksburg Virginia about June.

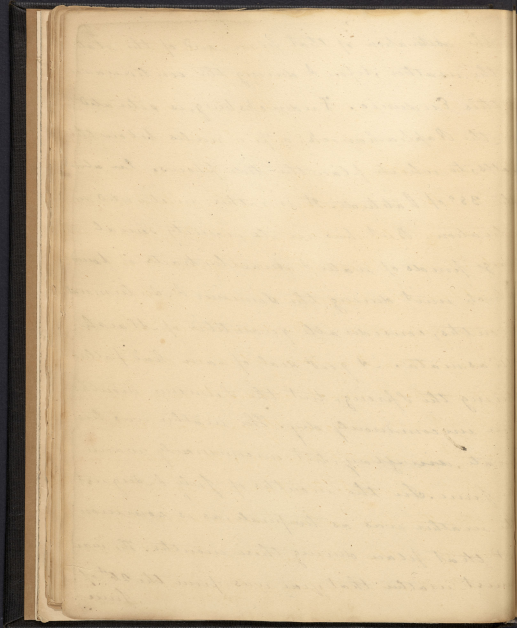
I shall confine myself principally, to a description of this disease, as it appeared in Fredericksburg, during the summer of 1808.

But previously to describing the disease itself it may be proper to give a short account of



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of the ~~habitation~~ habitation of that place, and of the state
of the weather; before & during the continuance
of this Epidemic. Fredericksburg, is situated
on the Rappahannock; a few miles below the
Falls, to which place the tide flows, I'm about
the 38° of Latitude. It is rather an elevated si-
tuation. But has in its vicinity several
large ponds of water & marshy tracts of land
which emit during the Summer & Autumnal
months, considerable quantities of Miasmata.
A good deal of rain had fallen
during the Spring, but the Summer months
were uncommonly dry. The weather was tem-
perate during day, but uncommonly warm
in June. In the months of July & August
the weather was as temperate, as is common
at that place during these months. The war-
mest weather that year was from the 26th of
June.



June to the 3^d of July during which time, the
 Mercury in the Thermometer ranged from
 84° to 95° of Fahrenheit. The children of that
 place had enjoyed very good health, until about
 the middle of June; when the disease first
 made its appearance in a family of Negro
 children who lived near a pond of stagnant
 water, from which place it spread to several
 neighbouring families & in a short time
 became general. The disease came on some
 times with a Diarrhoea, which continued some
 days without much apparent indisposition.
 But it more frequently came on with a
 violent sickness & purging. The pulse was
 quick & frequent. The face was sometimes
 swelled. The fever which accompanied it was
 usually of the intermitting kind; & the ex-
 acerbations were discernable generally in the
 evening.

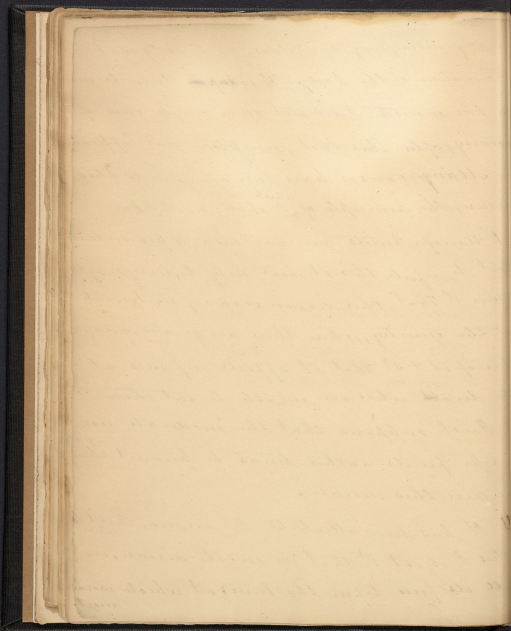
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evening, The matter discharged by vomiting,
was generally of a yellow, or green colour. The
stools were sometimes of the same colours, but
not infrequently mucus tinged with blood
was passed. Mucus was frequently dischar-
ged, the Eyes appeared languid & hollow, &
I was much surprised to see many of the
patients, sleep with their eyes half closed.
It affected children from the first or second
week after birth until the 4th year, after
which few ~~were~~ ^{were} affected by it. It was much
influenced by the weather, cool weather ge-
nerally abating the ^{violence of the} symptoms, & hot wea-
ther aggravating them. It proved fatal
in a few cases in twenty-four hours, but
when it was of long continuance its fatal
termination was gradual & attended by
many

many disturbing symptoms, such as great ⁵
irritation of the body. If ~~it~~ ^{it} convulsions
I a few months, I did not see a single case of
recovery, after this last symptom had appeared.

Many causes have been assigned to this
disease, the principle of ^{which} I shall mention.

1st Unripe fruits have been said to produce it.
But to refute this it will only be necessary to
observe 1st That this disease is rarely met with
in the country, where there are greater quantities
of it & 2^d That it affects infants at
the breast ^{at} who are unable to eat them.
Dr Rush supposes that the moderate use
of ripe fruits rather tends to prevent than
induce this disease.

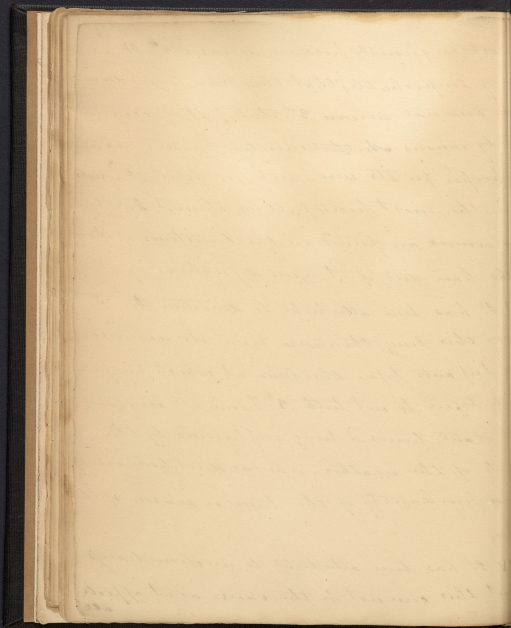
It has been attributed to worms, But to
this I object 1st That we see the disease, in
all its force before the time; at which worms
most



most frequently produce diseases. 2nd It is
very improbable, that they should produce
an annual disease 3rd That if it be occasion-
ed by worms Antihelminthic medicines would
be proper for its cure, but in fact it exists
under the most powerfull of them, & Lastly
no worms are found in the intestines of those
who have died of it, upon dissection.

III It has been attributed to dentition. But I
deny this being the cause from its occurring
in Infants before the time at which they usu-
ally begin to cut teeth. 4th From its occurring
at stated times & being influenced by the
state of the weather. whereas dentition occurs
independently of the time or season of the
year.

IV. It has been attributed to unclean linings
But this cannot be the cause as it affects
all



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claps of children.

✓ Dr Rush, supposes it to be a modification of the Remitting fever of adults. I am disposed to adopt this opinion from the following reasons, 1st From its being attended with Bilious discharges 2^d From the Remissions & Evacuations of the fever, that accompanied it. 3^d From the time & place, at which it occurs being nearly the same, as those at which the Remitting fever appears in adults. In the month of August the Soulds of the family of Stigons, in which I mentioned the disease as first appearing, were affected with the Remitting fever, In this family both diseases were more violent, than in any other; which I have attributed to their living near a large pond of water, which I consider as being the remote cause of both diseases. *Dr*

I think Dr Rush accounts very satisfactorily
for its appearing earlier in children; than
Remitting fever in Adults. He supposes, that
the constitutions of children; are more per-
sided from weakness to be acted on by the
causes; that produce this disease.

I shall now mention the remedies that were
employed to cure this disease. The first me-
dication was to evacuate the bile from the Stomach
& Intestines. For this purpose a dose of the
-getable Emetic was prepared. Which in some
cases was repeated several times, & in others
single one was found sufficient. The next
thing that was done, was to keep the bowels
open by means of some laxative medicine
Manna, Castor oil, Magnesia Calomel &c.
In some cases where the disease had continued
for sometime, & where it was supposed the

the offending matter had already been thrown
off, the evacuating plan was laid aside
& recourse was had to Opials, & Trinitaries
Sulph, with a few drops of Laud^m was found
of much use in relieving the pain, which in
some cases was very considerable, Pepper
mint tea was also useful, but the com-
bination of Opium, Calomel & Spicac as re-
commended by Dr. Miller, & which bears his
name, was generally preferred, with these re-
medies assisted by some others which I shall
mention the disease frequently yielded in
one or two days. Demulcents of different
kinds were used, such as, Mallows Tea, Gum
Arabic &c but the cheapest & in my opinion
the best was the Shagbark Elm bark which
grows in great abundance in the neigh-
bourhood

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-hood of that place, A hand full of the
Bark boiled in a quart of water made an
excellent demulcent, Syctions of Starch
or a decoction of the Bark of the slippery elm
with a few drops of Laudanum was very
efficacious in relieving the pain. As soon
as the more violent symptoms of the dis-
-ease were removed, Tonic & cordial me-
-dicines were used. A weak decoction of Bark
for the powder could seldom be retained on
the stomach was of much service, An infu-
-sion of Quassia with Cinnamon was an
excellent restorative. I have not menti-
-oned Rhus-Toxin as a remedy in this
disease, it seldom being so violent as to
require it, with the exception of a few of
the first cases that made their appearance.

There ~~was~~^{were} many other remedies employed ¹⁶ as
the Black berry root, the Crows foot boiled in
milk &c. & death attending the proper admin-
istration of these remedies, aided by the greatest
attention of the physician & the patients
friends, they all sometimes failed. Pure
& Country air may be classed amongst the
remedies that were used for this disease &
were more attended with greater success
& considerable number of children were
carried into the country by the advice of
the Physicians, very few of whom recov-
ered of this disease. Fortunately few fell
victims to this disease, It began to abate
about the middle of July & by the middle
of August of August had entirely dis-
appeared

- appeared, the weather was much more ¹¹
temperate, during the last of July & the
first of August; than it had been in June.
The Cholera Infantum, was followed by
the Remitting Bilious Fever; which was
much more malignant than on for-
mer years. —

Cholera Infantum

By William S. Davis
of Casper County
Virginia

